The Young People.

A BEAUTIFUL SWISS CUSTOM.

When from the vales of Switzerland
The dying sunbeams softly go,
And touch with gleaming, gold-tipped wings
The mountains' everlasting snow,
The herdsman on the highest peak
Stands up and trumpets forth each word,
Through Alpine horn with echoes clear,
"Praise God, the Lord! Praise God, the Lord!"

Then every peak that has a sound,
In repetition, word for word,
Rings out from other herdsmen's horns,
"Praise God, the Lord! Praise God, the Lord!"
For full a quarter of an hour
The valleys chime with one accord,
And on all sides the mountains ring
"Praise God, the Lord! Praise God, the Lord!"

The solemn stillness floats above
Each shepherd on his bended knees,
And secret prayers, from faithful hearts,
Rise heav'nward on the evening breeze:
Then darkness, with her dusky wings,
Fans out the sun's last lingering light,
And on the topmost summit sings
The herdsman's horn, "Good night! Good night!"

Then on the snowy mountain peaks
Each listening herdsman shouts with might
"Good night!" and echoes bear the sound
O'er mount and vale, "Good night! Good night!"
When in our heart we feel Death's touch,
May we, as slowly fades life's light,
To heaven shout "Praise God, the Lord!"
And whisper to the world, "Good night!"

—Mrs. W. Leslie Collins.

VALLEY FORGE.

Some years ago the Centennial and Memorial Association of Valley Forge, with the aid of the Patriotic Sons of America, purchased the house in which Washington spent the dreary winter of 1777. This substantial structure of the gray granite which was used so much in building in Colonial times has withstood the storms of more than a century past, and is to-day in a perfect state of preservation.

On the surrounding hills the Revolutionary soldiers builded their earthworks and forts so strongly and well that the changing seasons of all these years have not obliterated them; many portions of them are standing, and in as good a state of preservation as those of the late war.

The little village of Valley Forge is in a corner of Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, formed by the conjunction of the Valley creek and the Schuylkill river. It is an extremely picturesque spot. A mountain ridge on the opposite side of the creek shuts it in. The village street that is scarcely more than a road rambles along toward the valley formed by the two ranges that narrow it, until it becomes nothing more than a canyon, with the waters of the creek sparkling in the dark shadows of the wooded hills.

The village consists of an old mill that has gone to decay, a few stone houses and an antiquated hotel called the "Washington Inn." Leaving this and following the road, the visitor comes to the historic ground where the foundations of the huts, the rifle pits and the earthworks are still to be seen. This road is one of the favorite bicycling tracks from Philadelphia, which is only twenty miles away. The passing of these "silent steeds" or the rattling of a country wagon, and occasionally the sound of oars as rowers pass up and down the little stream, are the only ones that awaken the echoes of the secluded spot. The autumn-touched forest, that descends to the verge of the placid waters, makes pictures of rarest beauty such as the soul of an artist would revel in.

Some distance up is the old forge originally called "The Valley Forge." It was burned by the British two months before the army of Washington was encamped at this place, and new works were erected soon after the Revolutionary war. The iron used at the Valley Forge was made at Warwick, Chester county, and hauled there by teams. From 1757 the place seems to have been known as the Valley Forge, though in most legal documents of the day it retained the name of "Mount Joy." This name, it is said, was given it by William Penn, who, while exploring the place, lost his way on the hill south of the valley creek, which he named "Mount Misery," but when he reached the top of the opposite mountain and found where he was he named it "Mount Joy."

It was upon this mountain that Washington's army was encamped in the severe winter of '77. It was impossible for them, poorly clad and poorly fed as they were, to remain longer at Whitemarsh in their tents. Realizing this, the great commander took them into winter quarters in this more sheltered spot, nineteen miles from Whitemarsh. Here he ordered huts to be constructed, assuring the soldiers at the same time that he himself would "cheerfully share in all their hardships and partake of all the inconveniences."

Hundreds of soldiers made that dreary march with bare feet, and the pathway of these suffering patriots might have been traced all the way by their bloody footprints in the snow. And yet at this very time, according to a contemporary writer, "hogsheads of shoes, stockings and clothing were lying at different places along the roads and in the woods, perishing for want of teams or money to pay the teamsters," so handicapped was the commissariat by the interference of Congress.

The day on which the army arrived at Valley Forge, Congress had ordered set apart as one of thanksgiving for the victories at Saratoga, Washington and his whole army engaged in religious exercises. On the following day the soldiers began the construction of their huts. The commander, methodical in all things, directed their operations, by giving orders that the parties should be divided into twelve each, and that they should have enough tools to build with. He also promised a reward of $12 to the party in each regiment that finished its hut the soonest. A reward was also offered of $100 to the officer or soldier who would substitute a covering for the huts cheaper and more quickly made than boards.

Until his troops were all comfortably settled in their huts, Washington remained in his cheerless marquee. After this he made his headquarters at the house of Isaac Potts, a Quaker, which is the one standing now near the Schuylkill, and not a stone's throw from the little railway station. This place was the headquarters of Washington for six months, from December 19, 1777, to June 19, 1778. Martha Washington, who was such an unfailing support to her husband, both at home and in camp, was with him most of the time of his sojourn here. It is said that she rode over from Whitemarsh on a pillion. They were both mounted upon his powerful bay charger, who carried them with perfect ease. It appears that Martha did not remain long upon this first visit, but she returned to the headquarters again on the 10th of February.

In a letter to her friend Mercy Warren, written in March, she said: "The General's apartment is very small. He has had a log cabin built to dine in, which has made our quarters more tolerable than they were at first."

This apartment is a small room. The cavity in the window seat that Washington had hollowed out to hold his papers is still shown. It was covered by a cushion, and no one would guess that his most valuable possessions were concealed there. The old log cabin still stands at the rear of the house.

In February the wives of several of Washington's officers came o visit Mrs. Washington. Lady Stirling and the wife of General Knox were of the party. It is said that they were not idle visitors. They spent most of the time spinning yarn and knitting stockings for the soldiers.

The winter of '77 was one of the darkest and dreariest of Washington's whole life. There was a conspiracy to supplant him and to put General Gates at the head of the army. The Continental Congress interfered with his military operations, and there was dissatisfaction among his troops, especially those of foreign birth. The whole country that surrounded him was filled with Tories. Fortunately there was that in his personality that attached his men to him so strongly that no distress could weaken their affection for him, nor impair the respect and veneration in which he was held by them. Their sufferings had tried their fidelity to the utmost, and, be it said to the credit of those of American birth, they stood to their post nobly. It was the Europeans that deserted in great numbers and escaped to Philadelphia with their arms.

Isaac Potts, in whose house Washington was quartered, was a Quaker, and, like many of his kind, was disposed to be loyal to the King, but he became a Republican in the course of time. He related this characteristic story of Washington. One day while the soldiers were in camp at Valley Forge he strolled up the creek towards his forge. When not far from his dam he heard a solemn voice, and walking quietly towards the sound, saw Washington's horse tied to a sapling. In a thicket near by was the beloved chief in prayer, his eyes suffused in tears. He felt that he was upon holy ground and withdrew unnoticed. He was deeply impressed, and upon entering the room where his wife was, burst into tears. When she inquired the cause, he told her what he had seen, saying: "If there is any one whom the Lord will listen to, it is General Washington; and I feel that under such a commander there can be no doubt of our eventually establishing our independence, and that God in his province hath willed it so."

The "Headquarters House," as it is termed, is in a marvelous state of preservation, and appears from cellar to attic just as it did when Washington was domiciled there. The doors, with the quaint, old-fashioned locks, are just as they were when his hands opened and closed them; the floors, except a portion of one in the office room, are those over which his feet have trod in many a weary hour; the window glass and sashes are alike unchanged since the days when his anxious eyes looked through them at the huts of his soldiers on the near-by hills. Under the house is a deep cavern-like cellar, that the attendant lights a lantern for the visitor to view. The well called "Washington's well' in the log cabin yields a cool, clear draught. The house is not entirely furnished, but the articles that have been placed there are those of the Colonial or Revolutionary period, and give the place the appearance that it had when America's great chieftain was resident within it.—Globe-Democrat.

Birds That Build Play-Houses.

A few years ago a gentleman hunting in the wild forests of New Guinea, where no white man had ever before been, made a very surprising discovery. He had just shot at a small animal of some kind that ran up the trunk of a tree near by, when, happening to turn around, he found himself in front of a neatly built little cabin about a foot and a half high, in the midst of a lovely meadow of rich green mosses studded with many beautiful flowers.

He could not have told, at first, whether he was more pleased, puzzled, or amazed to find this elegant little playhouse in such a remote and deserted place. It looked as if it were built by woodland fairies. It was indeed much prettier and better made than the rude huts of the natives, and its discoverer could scarcely believe any beast or bird capable of executing such a piece of work.

A flat bit of ground, in which grew a small tree about the size of a light walking stick, had been chosen for the purpose, and upon this thecabin was erected with the little tree for its center post. Stems of an air plant, which would live and grow after they had been built into the structure, formed the walls and roof of the cabin, and fluttered their tiny leaves about the doorway that led into the pretty garden, where bright flowers and gaily colored berries and the wings of beautiful insects lay scattered about. But no one was at home, and not till sometime afterwards was the discovery made that the builders of the tiny playhouse and pleasure grounds were little birds. It was found, too, that these clever creatures are not only skillful architects, but excellent housekeepers, and that they not only build and decorate their cabins, but keep them in the most perfect order, all faded blossoms being carried away and replaced by fresh ones, all rubbish carefully removed, and no dirt or disorder anywhere to be seen.

First cousin to the garden birds, as the little cabin builders are well named, are the bower birds of Australia. These birds, instead of cabins, build arbors or bowers in which they meet to dance and frolic about. The bowers are very handsomely made, the walls are strongly formed of twigs and small branches woven together in such a manner as to bring the ends nicely in contact at the top, and the whole structure is covered with a layer of beautiful grasses, stones being used by the little builders to keep the parts securely fastened in their proper places.

These strange little playhouses are elegantly ornamented inside and out with various kinds of shells, pretty shining pebbles, gay scraps, little bones and skulls of small animals, bleached white, and the green, scarlet, and gold of the feathers of parrots and parroquets. Indeed, so well do the natives know the love the bower-birds have for brilliant and polished objects that, should they lose anything of the kind, they at once try to find the bower that has been beautified at the expense of their property.

After the male birds have performed the heavier labor of constructing the arbors, they leave to their little mates the lighter and pleasanter task of decorating them. This the lady birds proceed to do with great zest, often flying miles to find pretty little bits of glitter or bright color, or busying themselves about the bower, changing the ornaments, rejecting anything not suited to their taste. To these bowers the birds resort to enjoy themselves, as in a ballroom, bowing and dancing and turning about, playfully chasing each other up and down their gay arbor in an untiring whirl of sportive delight.—Popular Science News.

Some Old Fortification Guns.

Within the area of Fort Mason, a military reservation in San Francisco, and distributed as mere ornaments over its grass plats, there are at present eight cannon whose singular pattern, foreign origin and great age makes them the most remarkable relics within the State of California, as they are believed to be the oldest guns in the United States.

Of these guns, six are large fortification pieces and two are small, for field uses. The years of the casting of the larger ones are in raised letters upon the breeches, and these show that their manufacturer belongs to the seventeenth century, the oldest gun having been cast in 1673, the youngest in 1693.

Tradition about the fort has it that these pieces of ordnance were made in old Spain. They were certainly brought to California to fortify the Presidio of San Francisco in behalf of the Spanish Kings years before the despised Yankee invaded the region and began to shape affairs in a fashion which led to the merging of the political power into that of his great nation east of the Rockies.

The six large guns are of bronze; they average 1,500 pounds in weight, have a six-inch bore and throw a twenty-four pound ball. They were smooth bore, for the rotary rifle bore was not introduced until after 1833, and they could send a ball with certainty of aim about 1,000 yards, or four times as far as could a smooth-bore musket. They are from ten to twelve feet long, their great elongation of muzzle being due to the erroneous idea then prevalent among gun founders that the throwing power of the piece was increased by the length of the bore.

That these cannon were regarded as objects of importance and distinction amounting almost to veneration may be told not alone from the ornate embellishment which spreads from vent to mouth nor to the coats of arms mentioned, but from the fact that they each bear the name of some city or eminent person or some saint. Among these names the Sans predominate. There is the San Francisco, which now is mounted upon an old naval carriage, looking from a distance as ominous as a Krupp gun, its mouth open toward the bay which bears its name. There is the San Pedro, the San Domingo, the San Martin, while only two are given the presumably non-ecclesiastical names of Labirgend Barbaneda and Poder.

As to when these guns reached California only conjecture is possible. There were four presidios under the old Spanish regime—those of San Francisco, Monterey, Santa Barbara and San Diego. These were the headquarters of the military when California was under that rule.

It is known that when the adobe-faced fort, called San Joaquin, of the San Francisco fortifications was repaired in 1794, it had three twenty-four pound guns, and it is likely that all of these old affairs were then in what is now the State. It is known that until General McDowell gathered them together in 1882 they were scattered hither and yon, up and down the coast, and one was not known from the other. Since, however, this collection of them has been made, they have been mounted in Fort Mason. —San Francisco Chronicle.